



7 December 2022

## EDs in desperate need of urgent intervention

There are growing safety concerns inside public hospital emergency departments (ED), with patients seeking acute medical care forced to spend record amounts of time in clogged waiting rooms.

According to the [Bureau of Health Information](#), one in 10 patients who were treated and admitted to hospital during July to September spent more than 22 hours in the ED, prompting renewed calls for shift by shift ratios of one nurse to every three treatment spaces to be introduced statewide.

NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) General Secretary, Shaye Candish, said the latest hospital data was further evidence many EDs were unsafe and required urgent intervention to address staffing shortfalls.

"We cannot expect the health workforce to continue shouldering the burden of having seriously unwell patients needing acute emergency care forced to spend almost an entire day and night in an ED waiting room," said Ms Candish.

"The pressures being placed on health staff inside our EDs is untenable. We're seeing emergency nurses leaving in droves or reducing their work hours to manage their own health and wellbeing. This will continue until their workloads and concerns are resolved.

"The NSW government must address growing concerns for patient and staff safety inside what have become intense, pressure-cooker environments. It's unacceptable nothing tangible has been done to date."

NSWNMA Assistant General Secretary, Michael Whaites, said the latest data also showed the average length of hospital stays were up 14% (or 6.5 days) compared to the same quarter in 2019, and the longest of any quarter in the past five years.

"Our public health system is under significant strain and it's not something that's just crept up, these are systemic issues the NSW government has failed to sit down and adequately address," said Mr Whaites.

"We have been asking government for an extended period of time now to work with us on meaningful outcomes. Shift by shift ratios are a safe, evidence-based solution to the nursing workforce pressures. Following our recent meeting we hope that the Premier demonstrates that he is listening.

"The pressures on the system are widespread across our hospitals, from the EDs through to operating theatres, where elective surgery waiting lists are an ongoing concern. The BHI data shows that backlog is still hurting, with just shy of 100,000 patients waiting at the end of September.

"The people of NSW deserve better than this and they should expect better from their taxpayer-funded public health system."

---

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**



NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association

# Media Release

Michael Whaites, NSWNMA Assistant General Secretary - 0414 550 386

Gia Hayne, NSWNMA Media Advisor - 0488 015 317